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One hundred and eighty years ago, although Russia was well on the road toward building a navy capable of maintaining supremacy of the sea, with its superiority lying in guns, the small Japanese fleet with much better strategy and command, completely destroyed the Russian.

The Russians will never forget that battle, because it pointed out all the deficiencies of their naval organizations. The forces that made the long, difficult voyage from the Baltic to the field of operations also suffered during operations because of the continuous deficiency of materials and poor discipline of personnel. These forces were completely disabled in the field by a fleet with a much smaller force. Those who escaped left the field of action defeated. The innumerable technical faults of the ships were revealed. Another principal deficiency was the lack of support from groups who could not perceive the need for a highly technical modern fleet.

This was also true of the generation preceding the Russo-Japanese War, but today the USSR is again anticipating complete success. Few battleships were built after the Russo-Japanese War, although progress was being made in Russia by individuals who were continuously working on new naval construction. However, as far back as Peter I, any study of foreign ship-building yards was taken under careful consideration. Russia took a very important step in naval progress when she began having ship designs made in foreign countries, because, due to the lack of necessary shipyards and trained personnel, she could not find the solution for correcting the important technical faults of the Russian ships that took part in the Russo-Japanese War.

Russia sought the assistance of reputable Italian and French ship-building firms, and ships began to be launched in 1911. Four of them of Italian origin were at least 5 years ahead of other nations in many points of modern design. In addition, some destroyers of French design were among the best torpedo-armed ships. Russia still possesses these ships, but they are of little use.

The Russian Navy played a very unimportant role during World War I. Her fleet was of very little aid in the first advance operations and was offering no important aid in defense of the land armies when they were forced to retreat under pressure of Von Mackensen's armies. At that time, the Revolution was the final and most crushing blow to the Russian Navy. It was not recognized at that time. Yet in spite of this, the Russian Navy still exists.

As soon as the new Soviet Government was organized, and the USSR again became a great military power, a plan for the organization and careful consideration of a new fleet was drawn up. Taking the remnants of the old navy, the Soviet Government inherited a foundation for the new fleet. Four warships, remaining from the old government, were given new names: Murat, Parizhskaya-Kommuna, Obtyabr'skaya, and Mikhail Frunze. There were also some smaller ships that were left. Uncompleted ships and those in rusted condition since the Revolution remained as excess cruisers, destroyers, and auxiliary ships.

The chief duty of the Soviet Navy was to complete building the ships remaining from the former navy. This kept the Soviet shipyards busy until 1929. Three cruisers were produced: the Profintern, the Charvonia-Ukraine, and the Kramny-Kavkas. These three ships were all slow and unworthy. The first two named were of bad design. The third was later modified and equipped with 7.1-inch guns in single turrets. It was fairly good armament for this 3,000-ton cruiser.

From 1914 to 1917, a large part of the destroyers at the shipyards were completed, and they also proved superior.

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The year 1929 saw the second effort in the building of the Soviet Navy. The Russians, in accordance with the Five-Year Plan, began building new warships. It should be noted that the first ships they built were submarines. The Russians observed the rapid progress of German submarines during World War I, and they realized that submarines would be their most effective weapon because Russian sea operations would take place in narrow waters. There were two types of submarines: (1) the small type (Maldiki) built in mass production, with a 215-ton displacement, two 18-inch tubes, with a small radius of action; (2) the large type with a 800-1,000-ton displacement. No matter how close a copy these large subs are of the contemporary British submarines, the principal system followed is Russian design.

During 1934, the first large surface craft of the new Soviet fleet were built. These became the leaders of 15 flotillas in the Leningrad class. The construction of these ships was divided between the Baltic and the Black Sea shipyards. These were an imitation of the French (Fantasque) type in outward appearance, weapons, and tonnage. Although this type was very suitable for general fleet duties, it was very weak in antiaircraft defense as compared to other ships in the same tonnage class. The Russians then turned toward the Italian firm, Otero-Torli-Orlando, that was building a small medium-tonnage-type ship. This firm promised 35 destroyers of the Sternitel class. These were smaller than the Leningrad class and exactly like the Italian ships in speed, featuring light construction, and low superstructures. These ships have one less tube than the former type; four 12-inch tubes were installed, allowing it to function in narrow waters. Most of the Sternitel-class were built in the Baltic and Black Sea shipyards, but some were also built at Vladivostok. The Russians now turned their eyes toward the East.

The new Soviet naval program completed two types of large ships, the Tashkent-class torpedo-cruiser and the Kirov-class cruiser. The Tashkent was a very interesting ship. The Italians wanted to produce this ship for their own fleet; therefore the Russians gave it up.

The Kirov class, which the Russians have been building up to the present is the largest type of warship. It has the same characteristics as the Condottieri-class (light Italian cruiser) built by the Ansaldo firm. Its nine 7.1-inch guns give the 8,800-ton cruiser a powerful armament. This caliber was chosen because it compares with the army weapons. This unification and exchange of ammunition is an excellent plan, because in the long run it will standardize the equipment for a greater number of small-caliber guns. The Kirov is a Russian-type cruiser with Italian-type machinery using a limited amount of fuel. In this class are the Kirov, the Maxim Gorki, the Molotov, and the Voroshilov. Although they were completed before the USSR entered the war, the weapons of the last two ships were completed many years later. The fifth ship of this class, the Kaganovich was completed in 1942 at Nikolayev.

? The year 1924 was an unlucky one for the Soviets because of the approaching war with Germany and their lack of readiness for it. It took 2 years to stop the Germans and finally clear them from the USSR. The Soviet naval forces, during this war, were used as unsuccessfully as they were during World War I. For this reason, no progress was made in technical improvements. However, Soviet ships were as good as, if not better than, the enemy ships.

Today, the USSR is up against the same difficulty as of formerly -- the difficulty of a land nation in becoming a naval nation. During World War II, the Soviet Navy was not an independent power as were the American and

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British navies, but it was closely bound to the army. This system was the finest example of united command and leadership. With this command system, the naval forces were entirely under army control and completely supported land operations. It is understood that in this joint operation the navy functioned as though it were a part of the army.

However, even if the Soviet naval forces had been free from the control of the land army, they would have been effective because the enemy gave no opposition in either the Black Sea or the Baltic Sea. Transportation could have been stopped at intervals all along the German coast, and necessary materials for German industry from Scandinavian countries could have been effectively stopped. On the other hand, the Soviet Navy could have lifted a large part of the burden from the American and British navies in opposing the two dangers of German submarines and surface craft. The two large destroyers, the Z-35 and the Z-36, which the Russians claim to have sunk, were sunk by mines, and not in the course of battles; it is also doubtful that the mines were Russian. Because of Russian operations, the Germans lost five modern torpedo boats. All of them struck mines in the Finnish Gulf or Baltic Sea. The Germans lost only a single small warship by direct Russian attack. This was on 18 August 1944, when Russian planes sank the 1,100-ton destroyer, T-22, in the Finnish Gulf. Even this ship was not sunk by the Soviet Navy, because the attacking planes were part of the Red Air Force. Because of this joint command system, the Soviets have no worthy naval air force. The Soviet naval forces successfully carried out limited duties in shore bombardments, in establishing beachheads, and in providing transport and protection for army withdrawals. But all these accomplishments were as another branch of the army.

The Russians now understand such a position. This is obvious in Stalin's statement. It is also understood that the new Soviet fleet is to have large-scale reinforcements and the naval forces will have command and leadership independent from the land forces. During the war, young Admiral Nikolay Kuznetsov (44 years old) was put in command of the Soviet Navy, and other positions have been created. Russia made great progress by establishing these positions.

At the time of the writing of this article, Russia is fourth in world naval strength, following US, Britain, and France. According to the program this country is following, France will shortly be left behind. Soviet naval forces, composed of modern ships, are beginning to appear as a well-balanced fleet.

At present, the three largest warships in the Soviet Navy are the Arkhangelsk, Otkryabr'skaya Revolutsiya, and the Sevastopol. The Mikhail Frunze was named the Parizhskaya Kommuna in 1930. The Arkhangelsk, formerly the Royal Sovereign, is now in usable condition. The Otkryabr'skaya Revolutsiya and the Sevastopol had been built by the Italians before World War I. During World War II, the former was partly modified, and its air defense was increased by the lend-lease addition of several single 20-mm's and double 40's; the latter was likewise newly equipped. The Merat, lying along the breakwaters of Kronstadt, was bombarded by German planes, and although it was not completely sunk, it was damaged beyond repair.

Before the war, the USSR was building a 35,000-ton battleship that was in many respects similar to the Italian warship, Italia. Construction on it was stopped in 1941, and it seems there are no possibilities of completing this ship.

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On the other hand, the Soviet naval program does not place much importance on battleships because the Russians are giving careful consideration to the atom bomb, guided missiles, supersonic planes, and similar weapons. They consider it more essential to have a greater number of small, speedy, and quick-dispersing ships in their future fleet.

The USSR's new naval program calls entirely for cruisers and much smaller ships. To the Kirov class, the Russians have added the four cruisers, Kirov, Molotov, Voroshilov, and Kaganovich, and three more cruisers since 1945. One of them was built in the Black Sea; the other two, the Vladivostok and the Kalinin, were built in the Far East. With the aid of lend-lease, ships of this type have been reinforced with modern fire-control systems and radar. Three light cruisers also were lent to the Soviets. Among these is the Milwaukee, which was transferred from the US Navy. The other two, the Krasnyy Kavkaz and the Chervonaya Ukraina, were not used for active duty because they were very old ships. In the near future they will either be abolished or used as auxiliary ships.

There are less than ten Leningrad-class ships that survived the war unharmed. A large part of the present 50 Stermitel-class destroyers were completed since the end of the war. Many of the new Stermitel-class were built at Vladivostok. During the war the Russians took four of the old American steam-driven destroyers from the British. These ships were so worn out that the British gave them as scrap iron and not as active-duty vessels.

At the beginning of 1946, the Russians obtained 12 or more Italian submarines which they will be able to use to better advantage. The USSR also obtained via lend-lease a few frigates and large escort ships. This is as much as we know about the present Soviet naval forces, and we know even less of their future naval construction. To keep the skilled naval personnel, the USSR is adhering to wartime restrictions.

It is only possible to guess on these matters: once in a while, vague information leaks out. For example, it is still to be learned why the Russians have large shipyards in the Far East that are entirely given over to building warships, and why they are interested in America's construction of auxiliary vessels during the last years. The USSR program of future naval construction is a well-kept secret.

There are a few small matters of which we can guess; one is that for the first time in Soviet naval history, they are building a flying boat. During the war years, the Russians used a light flying boat, but there is no information whether it exists at the present. The Russians are reinforcing their Pacific fleet in great numbers. Flying boats, of little value in such narrow waters as the Baltic and Black Seas, are known to be important in the Pacific. We can guess that a part of the Soviet's Far East naval construction is devoted to the building of flying boats. These boats are probably of the type the English were building during the last years, small-tonnage, fleet-escort flying boats.

We can strongly guess at these matters: the Russians today are doing research on two fields of interest to the US Navy: guided missiles as one of the navy's weapons; and atomic energy for possible future use in submarines. Time will tell how much the Russians have accomplished in these and other matters of interest.

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NOTE: Since the writing of this article, the Soviet fleet has made some additions of skilled personnel to its new units. The Admiral Makarov (the old German light cruiser Moltke) has been added to the Kirov class in the Baltic. This cruiser was among the ships that were transferred to the Russians by the Potsdam Agreement, ten destroyers of the Narvik and Kibing-class, and at least 12 VEX-C, XXI U-class submarines. The 40,000-ton battle-ship Sovetskii Soyuz, is supposedly under construction, but this is very doubtful. The Arkhangelsk and the Murmansk being restored to their respective countries' navies, will be replaced by Italian ships of the same type. It has been announced that Russia now has 250 submarines.

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